

beginning of my Administration, the net total for fiscal year 1998 reflects nearly a 12 percent decrease since 1993.

The executive branch has worked jointly with the Congress to establish a partnership whereby all advisory committees that are required by statute are regularly reviewed through the legislative reauthorization process and that any such new committees proposed through legislation are closely linked to compelling national interests. Furthermore, my Administration will continue to direct the estimated costs to fund required statutory groups in fiscal year 1999, or \$45.8 million, toward supporting initiatives that reflect the highest priority public involvement efforts.

Combined savings achieved through actions taken during fiscal year 1998 to eliminate all advisory committees that are no longer needed, or that have completed their missions, totaled \$7.6 million. This reflects the termination of 47 committees, originally established under both congressional authorities or implemented by executive agency decisions. Agencies will continue to review and eliminate advisory committees that are obsolete, duplicative, or of a lesser priority than those that would serve a well-defined national interest. New committees will be established only when they are essential to the conduct of necessary business, are clearly in the public's best interests, and when they serve to enhance Federal decisionmaking through an open and collaborative process with the American people.

I urge the Congress to work closely with the General Services Administration and each department and agency to examine additional opportunities for strengthening the contributions made by Federal advisory committees.

**William J. Clinton**

The White House,  
March 9, 2000.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

## **Remarks at a Dinner Honoring Governor Mel Carnahan**

*March 9, 2000*

Well, thank you very much. Let me begin by thanking Smith and Elizabeth for having us into this magnificent, beautiful place, for the Democrats again and specifically for Mel Carnahan; and for being such good friends and for being willing to be called Smith Barney and Bailey Smith and other names. *[Laughter]* I'm sure there's a reward for you in heaven for enduring those slings and arrows.

I want to thank the other Senators who have come here to express their support for you. I see Senator Boxer back there, Senator Murray, and Senator Cleland. I think Senator Harkin is here. There he is. And Senator Wellstone and Senator Daschle were here. I don't know if they're still here or not. But this is quite an outstanding turnout of your prospective colleagues.

I also want all of you to know that I have a different take on this than everybody—this race—than everybody here who is not from Missouri, because Mel and Jean Carnahan have been friends of mine for along time. Robin has worked with me, and their children I've had a chance to know. I want you to know that you did a good thing tonight, contributing to his campaign, because he was a great Governor and because he's a good man and a good friend and because he'll be a good Senator.

I'm for him in part because when only my mother thought I could be elected President in 1991—and my wife, as she never lets me forget—*[laughter]*—Mel Carnahan was a Lieutenant Governor involved in a very difficult primary for Governor. He had all he could say grace over, and he still endorsed me for President in the Missouri primary. It was a brave and good thing to do, and I'll never forget it.

And I was the Governor of Arkansas. Missouri is my neighbor. I was raised idolizing Harry Truman. When I was a young man here in the Senate, I worked for Senator Fulbright and got to watch Stuart Simington up close. And I may be the only person here who's actually known Senator Ashcroft for

more than 20 years, besides Mel. We served together as attorney general and as Governor, and we always had a very cordial, personal relationship.

But I can tell you that he actually believes all those things that the Republicans say. [Laughter] And I say that not to make you laugh but to say, you know, one of the things I don't like in a lot of these campaigns is, we get into all this name-calling and demonization. We act like, you know, what's really bad about our opponents is, they're doing these bad things, and they don't really believe them. That's not true about him. [Laughter]

We can laugh about this, but that's what they think about us. They think we're always playing to some crowd or another. And I think it's important to point out that most of us on both sides actually believe in what we're doing. And that's what makes the political system work. It's what gives the political system integrity. The main reason that I want to see campaign finance reform, since I'm not a candidate for anything anymore, and the main reason I really respect Smith, because, you know, if we have campaign finance reform, it'll cost him a little less money, but then he'll have to open his home and have evenings where we actually debate the issues, instead of hustle you for money. [Laughter]

But the major reason we need to reform the campaign finance system, in my judgment, is that it's almost all the money goes to voter communication, and it's wrong to have unequal levels of voter communication. The people need to hear a full debate on both sides and have a full ability to evaluate the personalities of candidates on all sides in order to make good decisions. And the second main reason we need it is that the people in office and the people who want to get in office have to spend too much time raising money, and they're exhausted all the time, and they don't have enough time to read and think and talk to other people.

I would say the third reason you need it is the reason all the press says, which is, you know, the corrupting influence of big money. The truth is that over 90 percent of the time—way over 90 percent of the time—the people in both parties in the Senate and in the House vote their convictions. And way

over 90 percent of the time the people that give you money never ask you for anything, except to keep in touch with them and discuss the issues and talk about things and listen to them if they've got something on their minds.

Anyway, to get back to the point I was making, I know both these men. And I don't have to demonize John Ashcroft. When we were young men together, we worked as attorney general together; we worked as Governor. I had a very cordial relationship with him. But he believes in how he's voted in the Senate, and I don't. And we should stop pretending that it doesn't make any difference who wins, or that it's all some game dominated by who gives money and all that. That's not true.

There are two great philosophical differences of opinion today, battling their way through Washington. They won in the elections of '94. We won when we beat the contract on America. The people ratified our decision in '96. We got together briefly in the welfare reform bill and in the Balanced Budget Act of '97. Then our approach was ratified in the '98 election. And then we won again when I vetoed their huge tax bill in '99, which would have undermined our ability to save Social Security and Medicare, balance the budget, pay off the debt, and keep investing in our future.

But we have now had—we've got an ongoing debate here about what kind of country we're going to be, what our responsibilities to each other are, and where we're going. Now, I know this man very well, Carnahan. I know him very well. We worked together for years. I went to Missouri more than any other State when we were promoting welfare reform because he did the best job of any Governor in America in requiring people who were able-bodied to get training and to go into the workplace and getting big businesses to help him but, also, caring about the welfare of poor people, to make sure that the children had health care and the people had a decent place to live and the child care was there and the transportation was there. He did it right. And if he's in the Senate, he will do it right. This is a very important thing.

I can also tell you that for Democrats, because we believe in activist Government, it's very important that we keep a certain number of innovative Governors coming into the U.S. Senate all the time, because they understand how this stuff works. And it's important that you have people from our part of the country elected to the Senate, so that we can defend it when we have to take tough votes on sensible gun safety measures, for example.

It's not a hard vote for people who have no significant rural voters, no significant percentage for getting the NRA mailings all the time. It'll be a hard vote for him. And he'll take it, and he'll do the right thing, but then he'll know how to defend it, which is very, very important.

So all these Senate races are very important this year. All these House races are important. But I want those of you who don't know Mel Carnahan to know you have an extraordinary opportunity here. I know this guy. He is a good man. He is a great friend. He was there with me when I was practically all alone and running fifth in the pools in New Hampshire. You want somebody that will stay hitched in the tough times and take a decision when it's not self-evidently the right thing to do.

He has been a fabulous Governor, and you heard him reel off the issues. I just want you to know this is a huge deal. These judicial votes today were just one example. Senator Ashcroft voted to kill the African-American State Supreme Court judge in Missouri, Ronnie White and, I believe, did not fairly represent his position as a judge on criminal justice issues.

But there is an honest division here. You don't have to hate anybody to take the other one's part. But of all the races we've got going, where we're trying to elect a new person to the Senate, this guy has a unique ability to make a contribution to the Senate, to the policies and the politics of the Senate that no one else does.

You did a good thing in coming here. I hope you'll ask other people to give to his campaign. I think he's going to win, and all of us need to do whatever we can to help him.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:15 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to Smith and Elizabeth Bagley, dinner hosts; Jean Carnahan, wife of Gov. Mel Carnahan and their daughter, Robin. Mel Carnahan is a candidate for the U.S. Senate in Missouri.

## **Remarks Announcing the Initiative To Reduce Air Travel Delays**

*March 10, 2000*

Thank you very much. I want to thank Secretary Slater and Jane Garvey and the airline executives who are here, the representatives of the airline pilots, the air traffic controllers, and the other aviation leaders who have made a truly remarkable team for this announcement.

### **Minimum Wages Legislation**

Before I talk about the air travel issue, because this is my only opportunity to meet with the press today, and because I had the unusual good fortune of letting them parade in ahead of us, here—I actually tried to get Mark Knoller [CBS Radio] to do this announcement, but he refused. *[Laughter]*

I want to say a few words about a very down-to-Earth issue, the proposal to raise the minimum wage. I have called for a simple one dollar increase in the minimum wage to help millions of families. Last night, dozens of Republicans joined us in forming a majority to raise the minimum wage by a dollar over 2 years.

But unfortunately, the leadership turned that commonsense act into a dead letter by insisting they would only have a minimum wage increase if we turn back overtime protections for over a million workers and use the bill to give a large tax cut, which both disproportionately benefits the wealthiest Americans and would put our prosperity at risk by making it impossible for us to continue to pay down the debt and to save Social Security and Medicare.

Now, I think the American people question why Congress can't do something as simple as raising the minimum wage without loading it up with special favors. And I think it's a good question. The right answer is to send me a clean bill, a bill simple and clear, that could fit on one side of one piece of